



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## **1301.6 - Tasmanian Year Book, 1998**

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### **Feature Article - Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens**

**Contributed by Jean Gray, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens**

These gardens are an ideal introduction to the State's historic and botanic heritage. In 1806, just two years after the founding of Hobart, Governor Collins presented a grant of land to John Hagan who developed the area as a farm. This grant included the area now occupied by Government House. In 1818 Governor Sorell directed that the area be developed as a government garden. Governor Arthur ordered that convict labour be used to establish a botanical garden but it was not until 1828 that Mr William Davidson was appointed as the first superintendent. Davidson ordered a large quantity of seeds and trees from England and had also gathered seeds of 150 native plants from the slopes and summit of Mt Wellington. Evidence of the early conifer plantings is seen at the entrance to the gardens.

The Arthur Wall, which was completed in 1829, is constructed of freestone block on one side and bricks on the other. It formed a boundary to the Queens Domain. Because the wall was internally heated, exotic fruits and other plants could be grown or "forced", a practice often used in England to extend the growing period of fruits and to provide frost protection.

The 280 metre long Eardley Wilmot Wall and the impressive cast iron entrance gates are reminders of our heritage and nestle in comfortably with more recent buildings and plantings.

The gardens have important educational, botanical and horticultural research programs, thereby increasing knowledge about plants and assisting plant conservation. They offer a support range of native and exotic plants including the largest public collection of conifers in the Southern hemisphere, spectacular annuals and a vibrant conservatory display.

### **NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION PROGRAM**

The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens does extensive work with native plant conservation throughout the State. Seeds and cuttings are collected from the wild, plants are propagated at the nursery in the Gardens. In the case of threatened species, new plants are replanted in the wild, in an effort to increase wild populations.

Some plants are placed in the A. P. May Tasmanian Section, where over 600 species are on display, including approximately 50 threatened species.

The Education Service supports this conservation work by raising awareness of threatened plant species, and encouraging schools and the general community to be involved in solving problems associated with habitat destruction.

### **CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE GARDENS**

The extensive collection of plants and trees provides an ideal backdrop for activities ranging from family picnics and birthday parties to theatre and music.

The Horticultural Therapy gardening program continues to enthuse the aged and disabled people who attend.

A regular summer program of theatre for children and adults attracts a wide audience and the annual Tulip Festival of Tasmania allows visitors to absorb the botanical splendours of spring.

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